

Rajasthan, Jaipur, with a spherical white egg in its mouth. From its colour, size and general appearance, the egg looked like that of *H. flaviviridis*. The gecko was moving upwards and after about 2.5 m, it broke the eggshell with two or three blows. The empty eggshell was then thrown away. The gecko positioned itself right below the flowing yolk and started licking it up from the lower-most point, gradually moving upwards. While it was licking the yolk, another gecko appeared and approached it, but was chased away. It consumed the entire yolk within seven minutes. The gecko then moved to another wall.

The empty eggshell was c. 11 mm in diameter. After watching this strange behaviour, we examined all baths and toilets minutely. Many geckos were seen on the walls. Many eggs of

house geckos were also seen below various hideouts in ones and twos. The area was apparently a favourite breeding site of the geckos. The egg was perhaps lifted from one of the clutches from the same locality.

Feeding on gecko eggs by *H. flaviviridis* is an unusual behaviour for this species, hence worth placing on record.

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## 20. UROPELTID SNAKES AND THEIR PREDATORS

Birds are among the many predators of uropeltid snakes. Rajendran (1985) has reported predation by domestic fowl, turkey, guinea fowl, peafowl, owls and wild pigs on uropeltids exposed by digging earth. We have observed some new predators as described below.

I. The house crow (*Corvus splendens*) was seen to prey on *Uropeltis ellioti* at Matighatta in Hassan district of Karnataka State, on August 15, 1999 at 1440 hrs, in a coconut and areca farm. It had just rained and the soil was wet. We observed the snake crawling on open ground, between the areca palms. A house crow swooped down and pecked at the snake, but did not attempt to take it away. The snake immediately coiled itself around one of the areca palms and tried to burrow into the soil, but the crow did not allow it to do so. When the crow moved off

on being disturbed by the crowd of people watching, the snake took the opportunity and disappeared into the soil.

II. Two other instances are from Anaimalai hill ranges, Tamil Nadu.

(a) On August 21, 1998 at 1810 hrs, in the forest fragment of Varatuparai, we observed a Malabar whistling thrush (*Myiophonus horsfieldii*) preying on *Uropeltis ocellatus*. We were sitting among the tea bushes adjacent to a patch of forest, when we saw a snake come out of the soil, near the base of a tea bush (*Camellia thea*). A thrush flew down and sat on a branch of the tea bush, just above the snake, and watched it. A few seconds later, the thrush caught the crawling snake at the mid-body with its beak. It carried the snake into another tea bush and started tearing open the body. All this

while, the snake tried to escape by lashing at the bird with its head and tail, but was unsuccessful. The bird killed and pecked it to pieces, swallowed the smaller pieces and carried off a larger one.

(b) The Puthuthotam estate (10° 20' N and 76° 58' E) is situated outside Valparai, a hill station, which has coffee (*Coffea arabica*) and tea cultivation, and a patch of forest. The forest patch is one of the medium size forest fragments on the Valparai plateau (Kumar *et al.* 1995). The Pollachi-Valparai road passes through the Puthuthotam estate. Accidental killing of animals by vehicles on the road is very high in such patches (Kumara *et al.* 2000 and Vijay Kumar *et al.* in press). During maintenance operations on this road and a roadside drainage system, from August to September 1998, many Uropeltid snakes were killed. Vehicular traffic and domestic fowl killed other snakes as well,

that came on to the road. In one hour, domestic fowl were seen to eat up to 5 snakes.

The total number of deaths observed in a 300 m distance dug at Puthuthotam was 67 *Uropeltis ocellatus*, 9 other Uropeltid species and one *Melanophidium punctatum*.

Digging continued in the area, but we saw only one or two animals along a stretch of 100 to 200 m. This indicates a localized distribution of these snakes in clumps. *Uropeltis ellioti* is a common snake in western and southern Karnataka, especially on agricultural land. We have also seen many snakes killed during soil filling in agricultural land.

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## 21. *LEPTOBRACHIUM SMITHI* MATSUI, NABHITABHATA & PANHA, 1999 (ANURA: MEGOPHRYIDAE), A NEW RECORD FOR INDIA

*Leptobrachium smithi* Matsui *et al.* (1999) was described on the basis of megophryid anurans from Thailand that were hitherto referred to as *Leptobrachium hasseltii* Tschudi, 1838 (Frost 1985, Taylor 1962, van Kampen 1923, Zhao and Adler 1993: 116). This latter species was once considered widespread, with Java in the Greater Sundas, Republic of Indonesia, as the type locality (Iskandar 1998 for colour photograph; Dubois and Ohler 1998 for review). *L. hasseltii* was reported from

Meghalaya State in northeast India by Pillai and Chanda (1979).

A recent collection of *Leptobrachium* from Chandubi in the Mayeng Hill Reserve Forest (25° 48'-25° 55' N, 91° 21'-91° 32' E), altitude *c.* 90 m above msl, and Garbhanga Reserve Forest (55° 26' N, 91° 37'-91° 49' E), both localities within Kamrup district, Assam State, northeast India matches the description of *L. smithi* in the following characters: a moderate-sized species (male SVL 30.2-52.0 mm; n = 8; female SVL